

## Editorials

### A Peer-Review Perspective: Experiences with Authors

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The Publisher Editor has asked the Editorial Board to address the issue of effective writing in the academic context. Our advice should neither replace the guidelines for authors, nor be the sole source of motivation. It is, rather, intended to provide perspective, in particular to new authors, to structure their manuscripts in a reader-friendly manner.

It should not come as a surprise, though it may seem to some, that reviewers are mandated to help find a means to publish any given submission. Given that, we are charged to identify the key aspects of a contribution, characterize it, and, given this, provide recommendations as to how to refine, elaborate and, at times, reduce, the scope of the work or certain sections. The overall goal is to take what is, virtually always, a very well carried out and interesting study, and help formulate it in a concise manner which potential readers will find useful and informative.

One could question where one starts with a publication in order to satisfy the aforementioned constraints. In the case of the Int J LCA it is not with the abstract, which is a summary of each of the individual sections of the paper. Given that LCA is emerging, as well as coalescing around certain norms, not to mention International Standards, one key to any LCA study, other than methodological ones, is the assumptions. From the point of view of an editor, or reviewer, one likes to see the assumptions clearly stated and the conclusions drawn not only from the inventory data and impact assessment, but also a sensitivity analysis. Therefore, if I could make one single recommendation to authors, it would be to understand the limitations of their assumptions, state them clearly, and try to not make vainglorious abstractions of the results.

Given that the assumptions are stated, a sensitivity analysis planned and reported, and the data concisely summarized, the authors should move to the conclusions and tie them clearly to the previously mentioned elements. At this point they can then complement the results section with a separate discussion.

As a final point of advice, the introduction should reference key, recent, findings, and, unfortunately, many papers are sent back for further work either because the introductions are verbose or because they have omitted the current literature. Authors need to balance the, quite excellent, historic work, with citations to similar cases, as well as current trends in LCA.

To summarize, let me suggest the following:

- Be concise
- State your assumptions
- Carry out sensitivity analyses
- Link conclusions to assumptions
- Write a distinct discussion section
- Spend the majority of your time editing and polishing
- Use current citations in your work

This editorial is, as we noted at the outset, not meant to be a gospel, nor are we claiming this is the only way to write. Indeed, all of us must find unique means to be creative 'with a pencil' or, more likely, keyboard. We have elaborated the detailed way in which your paper is reviewed. True, it does not appear, in print, in the chronological order in which it is edited. However, that is, perhaps our final message. Write not to make a classic novel, or even poetry, but rather a document from the inside-out which is reader-friendly.

Our truly final message is to emphasize the importance of the **OnlineFirst publication**. You will no longer need to wait for the publication in the printed edition in order to cite your paper. When your paper is finally accepted and the page layout is finalized, it will immediately be published in OnlineFirst, which implies that you can refer to your paper by means of the DOI (Digital Object Identifier). The DOI is the Internet address of your paper from cradle to grave as well as its citation code. For further information on this exciting strategy, please go to: <http://www.scientificjournals.com/sj/all/onlineFirst>

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